

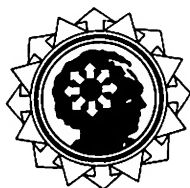
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# **Church, Morality and Democracy**

*by Rev. C.S. Reid*

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## FOREWORD

We were delighted when the Rev. C. Sam Reid accepted the challenge we gave him to examine the question of the Church, Morality and Democracy. It was, in some ways, a daunting task. How would an ardent churchman, the former Head of the Jamaica Council of Churches, adopt an objective stance in respect of the role of the Church in the building of Caribbean democracy? How could he comment without bias on questions of morality, in some of which the Church appears to have failed the society? Has the Church become too political? Are too many churchmen following an anglicised path of Liberation Theology as a way of satisfying their own repressed urge to be political leaders? Can it be that this preoccupation with politics has weakened the prophetic role of the Church in the safeguarding of the spiritual infrastructure of the society?

The Rev. Sam Reid, who was a Senator appointed in 1972 on the recommendation of then P.M. Michael Manley (PNP), but who was not a PNP member, and who was appointed an Independent Opposition Senator in 1983 on the recommendation of Prime Minister Edward Seaga (JLP), and who has been a commentator on radio and a *Gleaner* columnist, has shown an enterprising objectivity. This encouraged us to invite him to do the study.

We hope that readers will appreciate his efforts, and will learn much from his study. He has used Jamaica as the major example in his study, but conclusions on other similar territories may be drawn from this study. We are grateful to Mr. Reid.

*Hector Wynter*  
*May, 1987*

# INTRODUCTION

"We should be happy if you would undertake a study for our Institute on CHURCH, MORALITY and DEMOCRACY in the CARIBBEAN, using Jamaica as a model . . . We should like you to look at the contribution of the traditional and non-traditional Churches to Democracy in the Caribbean with special reference to Jamaica and the challenges facing the Church today, including the infiltration of ideologies . . ."

The above letter of invitation from the Hon. Hector Wynter, Chairman of the Bustamante Institute of Public and International Affairs, explains both the origin and scope of my assignment.

The proposal immediately intrigued me and I incautiously accepted, without giving due thought to the brief time allotted to complete the project, or to the fact that I was unlikely to be able to take much time off from a very exacting schedule of work, to do the range of research or level of reflection which it merits.

The stringent circumstances within which the work was done will undoubtedly be reflected at points within it. I sincerely hope however that it will yet prove informative and provocative of further discussion in matters of vital concern not only to the Church but to the peoples of the Region as a whole.

Because the remit is really a series of subjects rather than a single integrated topic, I have treated it more in the form of a series of essays on aspects of the subject.

A necessary historical background treats the founding and development of Caribbean societies with an examination of the Role of the Church in the making of our history.

Democracy as a concept is then given separate treatment. An attempt is made to see to what degree the Church's input has facilitated the development and maintenance of Democratic societies in the Region. Some MODERN CHALLENGES to the Christian Church in the area are then examined, with also an attempt to evaluate the impact of the Church on ethical formations in Contemporary Caribbean Society.

*C.S. REID*

*Montego Bay, Jamaica*

*October, 1986*

## CHAPTER I

# RETROSPECTIVE

### A. SPANISH DOMINATION

The Caribbean Society, as we know it, is the product of European colonialist expansion. When the Spaniards arrived under Columbus in 1492, they found the islands inhabited by Arawak Indians to the North and Caribs in the South of the Chain of Islands which came to be known as the West Indies. The population of Jamaica was estimated to have been as great as sixty thousand souls. Columbus was a religious man and he interpreted his role in the New World to be a two-fold one: (1) claim the territories discovered and their wealth for his patrons the King and Queen of Spain; and (2) claim the allegiance of the inhabitants of those territories for the Catholic faith. Catholic priests, soldiers, and miners, builders and farmers were all an integrated team of colonial conquest. They were all dedicated to the spread of Spanish Civilization and the establishment of Spanish Power in the New World. But an important element of Spanish Civilization was the Catholic Faith.

By the standards of the Age there was nothing incongruous between colonisation and religious proselytizing. Both European civilization and the Christian Religion were considered God's great gifts to the rest of mankind! So Columbus was sincere in his double objective. And the priests who crossed the Atlantic with the Spanish Conquistadores were comfortable about their mission.

But in the actual performance of their differing tasks, tensions inevitably arose between the representatives of the Church and the secular Arm of the Spanish Colonial team. The tension is dramatised by an incident in which a priest expostulated with Pizarro the Conqueror of Peru at the brutality with which the Indians were being treated. The priest pleaded with the Conquistadores to remember that they were there "to convert the Indians". Pizarro replied "I have come for no such thing. I have come to take from them their gold!"(1) It was a brutally honest statement. Inevitably this materialist quest of the colonists took precedence over the human concerns of the priests.

Churchmen such as Bartolomeo de Las Casas championed the cause of the Indians and sought to protect them from the worst excesses of their fellow Spaniards. Las Casas himself testifies to the extent of failure, in this quotation from a report to the King of Spain:- "We shall make it evidently appear to your Majesty that the Spaniards in about eight and thirty or forty years have unjustly put to death above twelve millions of your subjects; and what an incredible damage must Your Majesty have further sustained by these massacres . . . . if the poor

creatures put themselves in a posture of defence, they cruelly cut their throats without any distinction of quality, sex or age, such as escaped their fury they reserved for slaves, many of whom they condemn to the gold and silver mines, others they yoke together like beasts to make them carry vast burdens. They don't much concern themselves whether the Indians live or die, provided they reap some advantage by their labour." (2) In fact, the Indians, especially in the islands - died. Suppression, enslavement and disease eliminated the Arawaks and decimated mighty nations on the mainland of Central and South America. But the Colonists had come to stay. They built their Churches and Cathedrals and imported priests to minister the comforts of religion to their own.(3) And they imported Africans in increasing numbers to replace the vanishing Indian.

## **B. NON-HISPANIC COLONIAL EXPANSION**

In the first century or so after the arrival of Columbus, Spain struggled with ever decreasing success, to maintain its monopoly in the exploitation of the New World. It grounded its claim to the monopoly on the right of discovery and in a decree of the Pope dividing New World territory between Spain and Portugal. Portugal's chief interest was Brazil.

Other European nations disputed these claims and argued that the only right any nation had on any new territory was that of "effective occupation."

Through wars, the activities of Privateers and Pirates, the commerce of smugglers and the planting of colonies of their own, by the early seventeenth century, the British, French and Dutch had established an important presence in the Caribbean. "The English established their first settlement in 1624 in St. Christopher in the West Indies. There they were soon joined by the French. By the mid - 1630s, islands adjacent to St. Christopher were settled - Nevis, Anguilla and Montserrat by the English, and Martinique and Guadeloupe by the French.

The Dutch who were more interested in Trade, established island entrepôts in Saba, St. Eustatius, Curacao and St. Martin, all strategically situated for trade with surrounding colonies."(4)

In 1655 Jamaica was wrested from Spain by Cromwell's men who had failed in an attempt on Hispaniola. The island remained a British territory for the next 307 years! The islands of the Caribbean were thus colonised by these European powers: the plantation system based upon slave labour became the chief economy of the islands. The bonanza crop was the sugar cane.

Right into the first decade of the nineteenth century the population of the islands (and the labour force) was swollen by a constant inflow of Africans imported as slaves for the plantations.

The original inhabitants of most of the islands having faded into history, a new society made up of immigrants (willing and unwilling!) was created. To the two main blocks of Europeans and Africans, were added in the post emancipation period, waves of immigrants from India, China and the Middle East. In varying mixes, these are the racial components of Caribbean societies today. In most of the territories, negroes predominate numerically. In Trinidad and Guyana there is a delicate balance of Indians and Negroes in the population. In Jamaica at Emancipation in 1838, Negroes outnumbered all others by a ratio of twelve to one. There has been little change to this day.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **ROLE OF THE CHURCH - PRE-EMANCIPATION PERIOD**

We have seen that by Spanish Colonial policy, the Church was an integral part of the Administration. As a new colony was founded, a new bishopric was created. Spanish policy was not given to religious toleration: Christianity meant strictly - The Roman Catholic Faith.

A similar position on the part of France in the Seventeenth Century seems to be indicated in this anti-Semitic provision in the Code Noir, 1685:- "We instruct all our officials to expel from our islands all the Jews who have settled there, to them as declared enemies of Christianity, we command to leave within three months from the publication of this edict on pain of loss of liberty and property.

ALL PUBLIC RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE OTHER THAN THE CATHOLIC, APOLOSTIC AND ROMAN SHALL BE FORBIDDEN."  
(My emphasis.)

In the British colonies the Anglican State Church was given preference and support, but there was formal toleration of the various denominations as existed in the United Kingdom. The early British Colonists in the Caribbean were not notably religious men, and by and large they seem to have had appointed in their midst the kind of clergy they deserved. Leslie, in his History of Jamaica (1740) has some scathing remarks - "The clergy here are of a character so vile that I do not care to mention it; for except a few, they are generally the most finished of our debauchers." The clergy for the most part confined themselves to the formal religious duties entailed in weddings and funerals. But they were integrated into the civil and political Administration. "For example, they took part as ex officio members, in the conduct of local government, and some of them held civil and political offices. Clergymen served as members of colonial legislatures, and occupied seats both in the Council and Assembly. In addition, as members of the State Church, the clergy assisted in the dispensation of Social Services. In the colonial society, during slavery, there was no separate organization for the distribution of, say, poor relief. This work was done by the local vestries under the control of the clergy."(5)

### **THE DENOMINATIONS AND THEIR MISSIONS**

When Henry VIII broke with the Pope, he no doubt saw himself as head, in England, of a Monolithic Protestant Church. But this was not to be, and through the painful processes of Civil Wars, Revolution and

Compromise, a *modus vivendi* of Toleration was arrived at. The Protestant Denominations or Free Churches were granted the right to exist and to practise their faith according to Law.

The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries saw the rise of a vigorous Missionary Movement connected to the Free Churches e.g. the Baptist Missionary Society (B.M.S.), the London Missionary Society (L.M.S. - of the Congregational Churches) and the Methodist Missionary Society. These societies were formed to give expression to the will of their Sponsors to convert "the whole wide world for Jesus."

The great difference between the clergy of the established English Church and the Missionaries of the Denominations was that whereas the clergy basically accepted the white colonists as their parish, the missionaries treated the free coloureds and the slaves seriously as persons worthy not only of 'Conversion' but of Christian nurture. They therefore brought a zeal and dedication to their task, and showed such a level of human concern for the slaves as could not fail to have impact. They opened schools and taught slaves and their children to read.

- The white planter class viewed them with suspicion and considered their activities possibly subversive.

- The slaves recognised their genuine interest and many came to trust them.

A special circumstance in the development of denominational work in Jamaica is worthy of mention. This was the case of the Baptists. While most Christian missions in Jamaica were pioneered by Europeans, the first Baptist Preacher was a black American ex-slave named George Liele. Between 1783 when Liele began preaching in Kingston and 1814 when the first English Baptist Missionary came at the invitation of Liele and his colleagues, the pattern of a ministry of love among the despised slaves was set. To the credit of the Missionaries, it must be said that they did not depart from that pattern. It was to create for the Baptists a peculiarly significant role at pivotal points in the early history of Jamaica. Many obstructions were put in the way of the missionaries by the Local Assemblies in the islands. They had to obtain a licence to preach and this was not lightly given. Further they could evangelise among slaves only with express permission of the slave owner. Preaching was not permitted after sunset.

However, the argument put forth by missionaries that Christianised slaves were more docile and conscientious won acceptance by some planters who later facilitated the work of missionaries. A Jamaican planter wrote in 1816 "By the overseer of Greenwich's express desire, the Moravian has agreed to give up an hour every day for the religious instruction of the negro children on that property . . . . I am myself ready to give free ingress and egress upon my several estates to the

teachers of any Christian sect whatever, the Methodists always excepted . . ." The prejudice against the Methodists sprang from the fact that some of the strongest champions in the Abolitionist Cause in England were of the Methodist faith.

On the basic issue of slavery, the missions had trod a very careful path. It was as much as their life was worth, for them to be openly anti-slavery in their utterances. They could be arrested for sedition and inciting rebellion. But by their actions, some took on the role of Champions of the rights of the slaves as human beings. William Knibb for example, had frequent altercations with planters or their agents over individual acts of cruelty to slaves and in one particular instance threatened to present a report to the Colonial office in London against a local planter. Not surprisingly, the slave rebellion of 1831, led as it was by Sam Sharpe a deacon in the Baptist Church at Montego Bay, provided an ideal opportunity for Knibb's enemies to get at him. He and four other missionaries were arrested and in danger of being executed for implication in the rebellion as instigators. But no reliable witness could be found to testify against them.

However, numerous nonconformist chapels were destroyed by white mobs after that rebellion, and the resulting hostility triggered a decision of the Baptist Missionaries in Jamaica to become open advocates of abolition. Knibb was sent to England to give evidence for the Cause. On 21st June, 1832, Knibb made his declaration to the Baptist Missionary Society:- "Success has attended your missionaries in a manner which has appeared to promise the commencement of the Millenium. But I need not say that all is lost, that our harps are hung upon the willows, and that the voice of praise is no more heard in our streets. A combined Satanic effort has been made to root out all religion; The Sanctuaries of God have been broken down with axes and hammers . . . Feeling therefore as I do, that the African and the creole slave will never again enjoy the blessings of religious instruction . . . unless slavery be overthrown, I now stand forward as the unflinching and undaunted advocate of immediate emancipation."(6)

There is reason to believe that the strength of the testimony which he gave before Committees of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, helped to hasten the passing of the EMANCIPATION ACT which brought about the abolition of slavery in British colonies in 1834.

## **CHAPTER III**

# **POST EMANCIPATION ACTIONS OF THE CHURCH**

Emancipation brought a new set of problems for the former slaves and those who had an interest in their welfare.

- The slave huts they used to occupy belonged not to them but to the estates. If they wanted to retain occupancy they would have to pay rent.
- Many did not wish to continue working on the estates, the locus of their enslavement: but where could they go? They had no land or capital.
- They could charge for their labour, but their former masters were not about to volunteer a fair wage.

This crisis provided also the occasion for bold and creative action on the part of the church. In Jamaica, the Baptists in particular had the confidence and respect of the emancipated blacks who looked to them for guidance. William Knibb involved himself in negotiating an acceptable daily minimum wage for the freed men. Left to the mercy of the planters, the wage they offered would have been inadequate to pay for the rent they were demanding for the former slave huts and provision grounds.(7)

## **FREE VILLAGES**

However the more fundamental response of the missionary pastors to the plight of the new citizens was a major exercise in Land Settlement. There were many unprofitable and bankrupt estates up for sale - mostly in the hills. In 1835, the Rev. James Philipppo the Baptist Minister at Spanish Town, bought a small property in the hills above the Old Capital near the country residence of the Governor Sligo. This was subdivided and a village created with the basic amenities of church and school at its centre. This was Sligoville - the first FREE VILLAGE.

It was the first of many that would spring up across the country, as the missionaries, aided with funds from abroad acquired and subdivided properties, thus giving the Free Black citizens of Jamaica their first stake in the Land. This was the foundation of Jamaica's independent peasantry.

Other denominations such as Methodists and Moravians did follow the Baptist lead in this matter. Thus for example, Maidstone in Manchester was a Moravian foundation. Similar efforts were taking place in other Caribbean Colonies though not on the same scale, as the negroes endeavoured to detach themselves from the sugar estates and their unsavoury associations of the past."(8)

## DEMOCRATIC RIGHT

A politically important aspect of the Free Village system in Jamaica should be recognised. The Baptists at least insisted that the lots in their villages should be of a size which would enable the owners to qualify on the electoral roll as voters. It was a way of ensuring for these people a right to participate in the democratic process, from the very outset, on the road of freedom.

Much of the sturdy independence and social stability which are hallmarks of rural Jamaica can be traced to this farsighted programme of social reconstruction, pioneered by the churches.

## EDUCATION

The other main and lasting initiative of the church was in the field of education. Early Caribbean colonial society had little real interest in education. Many of the white land owners were barely or not at all literate themselves. Their interest was in making money. Those who cared and could afford it, sent their sons to England to school. Very few showed any interest in establishing schools locally. The few endowments that were made hardly came to practical flowering until in the nineteenth century.

But education was integral to the total strategy of the missionaries. In Jamaica, it was sometimes easier to receive a licence to start a school than to start a church! Thus major personalities such as William Knibb and James Philippo started out as teachers. Every preaching station doubled as a school house.

The following extract from a letter of Philippo's to his mother in 1828 shows how integral to his ministry was the educational programme of the mission:- After breakfast "We go down into the school which is on the floor beneath us and which we Superintend, and there remain until other engagements require attention. At two o'clock when at home, I again visit the school, and remain till it is over for the day. About half-past-four we dine, then get ready for Chapel, Class Meetings, Singing Classes, Leaders Meetings, Evening Adult School, or meetings of some kind or another in town or country." (9)

Apart from the insight into the busy life of a Missionary, the letter is important evidence of the involvement of the Mission not only in formal day school for children but also in evening adult literacy classes. No wonder their enemies among the slave owners reckoned that the missionaries were dangerous. They were imparting to slaves skills of literacy which many whites did not themselves boast!

The outlines of the role which the church was to play in the development of Jamaica's national life were defined in the Pre-Emancipation period and expanded in the period following abolition.

Apart from the early period of Anglican ministry to whites only, the church did not restrict itself to merely formal religious functions. Persons of learning and leadership qualities were too scarce a resource in any case to be that restricted, and both priests and missionaries became drawn into the social, political and economic life of the colony in various ways. The missionaries brought the ethos of their faith to bear upon all areas of their activity, and by their sincerity and probity commanded the grudging respect, if not the love, of many irreligious men. Their labours in social reconstruction after emancipation gained for them a fame beyond the boundaries of their island, and a permanent place in the nation's history.

## LOCAL LEADERSHIP

But the wave of the future would not depend forever on white European initiative. The African slaves had engaged in a restless struggle against their owners in a multitude of ways, erupting periodically in violence. But with the Sam Sharpe Rebellion of 1831 a new phase of the struggle was ushered in. Sam Sharpe was not an African but a negro Jamaican Creole i.e. - 'born and bred' in Jamaica. And Sam Sharpe was a Christian - a devoted deacon of Mr. Burchell's Baptist Church in Montego Bay. Scriptural understandings about brotherhood and freedom provided the ideological basis for Sam Sharpe's Movement, and thousands of his followers were God-fearing people. Sharpe was literate, and had been given leadership roles in the church. All these elements combine to indicate that one effect of the effort to christianise the slaves was to prepare a new breed of Jamaican to conceive and engage in a bold and creative political act.

Similarly, it is significant that in 1865 when the post-emancipation regimes seemed callously determined to perpetuate a system of injustice, it was a coalition of Jamaican Churchmen - George William Gordon in the House of Assembly and Paul Bogle in the hills of St. Thomas who assailed that system in the name of God, and brought it down, though they died in the event. For 1865, as students of Jamaica's history will know, marks a new beginning in the constitutional and economic life of Jamaica.

## CALABAR

Before closing this section, mention should be made of one important institution spawned by the Church in Jamaica at the very dawn of freedom which was to have as important a role in Jamaica as Codrington College in Barbados.

In 1843, the Baptists, having determined on independence for their work, and missionary enterprise from Jamaica to Africa, founded CALABAR COLLEGE. The objective was to train Jamaican Pastors and Teachers who were equipped not only to function in their native land, but

to take their Gospel and learning across the seas and "back to Africa." The first "Back to Africa" Movement was not Garveyite or Rastafarian, but Baptist!

The Calabar Institution was to prove itself through the years a powerful sustaining force in the life of the Free Churches in Jamaica. It prepared men not only for the Baptist Ministry, but for other Free Churches as well until in turn the Methodists founded Caenwood College and the Presbyterians founded St. Colmes. For many years also, teachers were trained at Calabar. Eventually, when the Ecumenical Institution now known as the United Theological College of the West Indies came into being, (1966) Calabar College was the oldest of the uniting Institutions that co-operated in its founding.

Bearing in mind the basic interest of this study, it is important to note that five years after emancipation, the Baptists expressed such a level of confidence in the Jamaican as to begin to train native Jamaicans to be pastors and teachers, thus registering a determination not to remain dependent upon foreign clergy for perpetual leadership. By 1849, the Jamaica Baptist Union was founded, an independent Jamaican Church, organized to run its own affairs, though still working in the closest fraternal relationship with their British Baptist colleagues. When Jamaica achieved political independence in 1962, she was trailing a section of the church by more than a hundred years!

## MODERN ERA

Church and society in the Caribbean have come a long way in the 150 years since Abolition. The islands which were administered as separate units answerable to London in colonial times, have maintained their insularity.

The brief experiment of West Indian Federation quickly foundered when Jamaica withdrew in 1962, quickly followed by Trinidad. The territories have sought independence separately, and so the Caribbean confronts the world as a loose collection of small Independent States, each struggling for economic survival.

The United States of America has replaced Great Britain as the major power in the region. Just as the European conflicts of the early centuries spilled over into the Caribbean and vitally affected these islands, so now the region is awash with the ideological conflict being waged between capitalist U.S.A. and communist Soviet Union.

The churches have all been trying to pull their wieght in this century, and are an integral part of the nation-building effort. The unhappy record of the Anglican Church in pre-emancipation Jamaica has long been left behind; and this denomination has sought to be as resourceful as any in finding ways of strengthening the life of the nation - outstandingly so in the field of education.

## CHAPTER IV

# DEMOCRACY

A main concern of this study is the role of the church in fostering democratic ideals and processes in this region.

But what is Democracy? The world today presents a bewildering variety of regimes all of which claim to be "Democratic" but many of which in practical terms suppress every criterion of 'Democracy'. We must clearly begin by examining some definitions. The word comes from the Greek demos = people - Kratos = power, sway, dominion. In popular language - "people power".

**DIRECT DEMOCRACY** was practised by the small city states of Ancient Greece. In this form, political decisions were made by the whole body of citizens under procedures of majority rule. The franchise was based on the freedom and equality of the citizens to participate in legislative duties. Important decisions were taken by majority vote of assembly of citizens. This obviously would become unwieldy and impossible as population increased and dispersed over wider areas.

Direct democracy died in the land of its birth with the defeat of Athens by Sparta. Famous Greek philosophers looked upon democracy as they knew it, with disfavour. Plato preferred a republic ruled by self-less wise men while Aristotle became tutor to Alexander the Great - a Warrior King.

Monarchy would hold centre stage for many centuries through the Middle Ages to the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire. But a concept was developing - that was the idea that authority in a state rested upon the primacy of LAW. Kings and commoners alike were subject to LAW - Divine Law, 'Natural Law', Customary Law. Individual rulers therefore could not be considered 'Absolute'.

## REPRESENTATIONAL DEMOCRACY

Through a long and painful history, the concept of Parliamentary or Representational Democracy developed in Europe led by Britain. In the first place parliament was really an assembly of regional barons or sub-rulers, summoned by the King to discuss the business of the State - especially war and taxes! 'The people' did not really have much of a say. Power-sharing was first done between monarch and wealthy barons and merchants. But as early as 1690, the English philosopher John Locke had enunciated a doctrine of Natural Rights of Man which he defined as PROPERTY, divided into LIFE, LIBERTY and ESTATE. These are every man's entitlement.



"Governments are created by a social contract designed for the preservation of that right: and when rulers violate the terms of that contract, society has a right to depose and replace them." But how are governments formed? Everybody cannot govern, but every citizen ought to have a say in "who governs." Thus the concept of an elected parliament. The key to the citizen's political authority is the franchise or vote. The power of the franchise was not easily given to the common people by the landed gentry and the wealthy. Not until the Reform Act of 1832, did the British Parliament come near to being democratically elected. Even then it would be many years before the vote was allowed to women! The road towards the resurgence of the principles of democracy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is marked by some famous slogans. "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" was the banner of the French Revolution. "No Taxation without Representation" was the war-cry of the revolting American colonies.

The *Spirit* of Democracy had come alive in an age that was receptive to change from the old autocratic order of the Age of Monarchies. It would be a much more difficult thing to construct systems of Government that would give true justice to that admirable spirit.

## **TOTALITARIAN "DEMOCRACY"**

The above sub-heading may sound like a contradiction in terms. And I believe it is. But it accurately describes a political system which does exist, which is totalitarian in its methodology but which constantly makes great use of the words "democratic" and "democracy".

Karl Marx argued that private capital was the source of oppression and therefore the enemy of true democracy. Economic egalitarianism was the aim of the Socialist System. Lenin was left the task of devising a political instrument to achieve this. The primacy of the Communist Party as the vanguard of the Proletariat became this instrument. This elite minority (THE PARTY) permeates and controls all aspects of a nation's life claiming always for its legitimacy that it is acting on behalf of the people. In fact this elite minority dictates the course of things.

Elections are largely ceremonial affairs, because no dissent is permitted. All candidates of the Party and serious "opposition" as practised in Western Democracies would quickly bring imprisonment for anti-state activities. No wonder such regimes regularly return governments with majorities of over ninety percent (90%)! There is no real contest. But inasmuch as there has been an election, these governments claim to be democratic. A similar brand of One-Party Rule obtains in some parts of Africa, though not always under the communist ideological banner.

## RELATED CONCEPTS

It is obvious that a meaningful definition of Democracy must include more than the concession of a vote to all citizens. The political act of taking a poll depends for its validity upon other important concepts which must also be in place.

### 1. The DIGNITY and WORTH of the Individual.

The individual human being is worth more than a vote. His vote is worth securing because he is of intrinsic worth./ The United Nations declaration of Human Rights begins at Article I with this fundamental statement:

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience, and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Whether consciously or not, this statement strongly echoes that famous passage in the 1776 United States Declaration of Independence which reads as follows: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just Powers from the consent of the governed."

We will not here stop to analyse the practical recognition within independent U.S.A. of these "self-evident" truths in the succeeding two centuries. We simply take note of the statement in a historical document of major importance, of a philosophical position which is of much relevance to any discourse on democracy. Recognition of the equal worth of individual persons stands as a rebuke against the temptation of any class, clique, race or group to deny the proper rights of any other within a given society.

If governments and government-generated institutions are the result of a "contract" (whether conscious or not) among individuals - the aim is to provide services to individuals, which they could not on their own provide. This is not now to get involved in the sterile argument as to whether the individual is more important than the society. They are both closely bound up in a life relationship. But unless the intrinsic worth of the individual is upheld, the embrace of society can often for the individual become a kiss of death. For society is powerful enough to defend itself against the deviant individual. But it can also suffocate and stultify the individual. Democracy therefore, which professes to base itself on the 'People', must make adequate provision for maintaining the worth and respect of the 'Person' i.e. the individual. Otherwise it can simply deteriorate into a tyranny of the majority. Indeed, the 'majority' can easily become a fiction with a few well-placed manipulators, contemptuous of the individual, operating the levers of power. Such regimes are in plentiful supply in the world today.

## **FREEDOM/LIBERTY**

The Concise Oxford Dictionary's first definition of the word "FREE" reads thus: "Not in bondage to another; having personal rights and social and political liberty." Of a State it reads "Subject neither to foreign domination nor to despotic government, having national and civil liberty."

This definition neatly draws attention to the difference between the formal status of a nation that is independent in the sense of not being subject to any external power and thus "free"; and the status of the individual citizen within the State. There are many States which are undoubtedly free and autonomous. But their citizens lack the personal freedoms which are traditionally considered the rights of free persons. (e.g. The Soviet Union or South Africa!)

- FREEDOM FROM ARBITRARY ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT WITHOUT TRIAL
- FREEDOM TO ASSOCIATE WITH FELLOW CITIZENS OF LIKE MIND FOR POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC PURPOSES
- FREEDOM TO PRACTISE AND PROPAGATE THEIR RELIGIOUS FAITH
- FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN THEIR COUNTRY AND TO TRAVEL OUTSIDE THEIR COUNTRY
- FREEDOM OF SPEECH - which includes receiving and transmitting information unhindered by state force, and the right to hold and express opinions contrary to the "official line".

Freedoms are also alternatively described as Rights. Human Rights are those entitlements inherent in every human being by virtue of his being HUMAN. They are considered to be separate from those important physical needs and comforts which are the reasonable expectation of citizens of a modern state. In recent years there has been an ideological cleavage in the emphasis being placed on the two types of 'Rights'. Communist nations which have a notoriously bad record on the traditional Human Rights, and assorted supporters of the Left have strongly argued that more important than Human Rights are "Economic Rights" such as Food, Clothing, Shelter and Gainful Employment.

The problem is that while these things were and are generally guaranteed to slaves, they remained and remain fundamentally unfree! It is the duty of good government to seek to ensure for its citizens such economic benefits as adequate food, clothing, shelter, employment, health services and education. These can be achieved to the degree that resources of the country can afford.

But the Human Rights associated with the FREEDOMS listed above, can be guaranteed within the poorest of nations. A people do not have to be wealthy in order to be free. But there are those who argue that freedom is a luxury which may be postponed until the appurtenances of wealth are obtained. Since this millennium does not come overnight, and

has not come anywhere, this argument is a justification for condemning whole generations to the conditions of a police state. If democracy is to be a useful concept, it must include the commitment to a society of **FREE PERSONS**.

## **EQUALITY**

The concept of 'Equality' figures prominently in major modern statements of democratic import. It is there in the slogan of the French Revolution. It is there in the American Independence Constitution. It is there in the United Nations' Statement on Rights.

It is not surprising that eighteenth century Europeans, emerging from centuries of feudalism and the oppressions and pretensions of absolute monarchs, and the accompanying humiliations of a multigraded class system, should seize upon the concept of equality as one of the cornerstones of a revolutionised society. Hence the abolition of titles in the wake of the French revolution and the adoption of the great leveling form of address for all classes and ranks of "CITIZEN."

It is in that same spirit that the Constitution of the U.S.A. insists "No title of nobility shall be granted by the United States: and no person holding any office of profit or trust under them, shall, without the consent of the Congress accept of any present, emolument, office or title of any kind whatever from any King, Prince or foreign State."

Communist doctrine is formulated on a theory of original equality of men in ancient society which was lost when society became more complex and stratified. The objective of communist social engineering therefore is that all classes save one should be eliminated and the working class shall have dominion. (of "The Communist Manifesto" and Engels' note on this point to the English translation of the Second Edition, 1888.)

The contradiction within the Communist system springs perhaps from the very fact that its aim is less a social state based on the quality of persons, and more on a society in which one particular class (the Proletariat) dominates. When the interests of that class become identified with the existence and activities of one party - the Communist Party, the door is open for the dictatorship not of the Proletariat, but of the Communist Party. Since in no existing state does the Communist Party constitute a majority of the adult population, the Communist regimes are therefore a dictatorship of a minority. Since this minority admits of no opposition and does not conceive of the possibility of giving up power, one must ask in what way does this differ from the medieval claims of European Monarchs to the "Divine Right of Kings"?

The concept of equality of persons surely cannot relate to whether one was born into one class or another, but to the fact that one belongs to

the human race. On this basis the Apostle was more perceptive when he told the Athenians that God had made "of one blood" all nations who dwell on the face of the earth. (Acts 17:27). It is this essential worth or dignity inherent in each as a human person that entitles each to claim equal rights with others under the rules by which society runs itself. Inevitably, the standards of justice within a state are affected to the degree that 'Equality' has meaning within a given society.

This brings us naturally to the final of this series of concepts which we believe help to flesh out the meaning of Democracy.

## JUSTICE

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines justice thus - "just conduct; fairness; exercise of authority in maintenance of right." In a modern state justice is defined in a system of laws, and the system of justice included the organs of state that are charged with protecting the rights and property of the citizens against unfair or criminal assaults; provide for a fair and impartial settlement of disputes; ensure proper disciplining of those who criminally prey upon society and ensure a speedy and fair trial for those who are accused.

Every country of whatever ideological complexion, has its laws. The acid test from a democratic point of view is posed in a two-fold question:-

1. Are those laws consistent with the accepted principles of Human Rights, i.e. are they in themselves *laws*.
2. Are those laws applied and administered fairly, i.e. are they applied evenhandedly without fear or favour of persons or classes?

Justice is not justice if it is built upon laws which enshrine injustice and oppression. This surely is the charge that must be laid to the 'justice' system that obtains in South Africa with its Apartheid system: where a whole compendium of laws exists to disfranchise, marginalise and oppress a majority of the people, solely on the basis of their racial origin.

Similarly, damaging charges can be laid to the Soviet Justice System which accommodates a misuse of police and mis-application of legal processes so as to have distinguished persons of conscience incarcerated in psychiatric hospitals simply because they dare to criticise the system or expose an unpalatable truth. In a democratic society, laws must be fair and be fairly applied, for under this banner, justice means justice *for all the people*, or it is not justice at all. Laws and systems which permit the state to imprison, isolate or exile citizens without trial are unjust. Systems which prevent workers from forming unions of their own choice and harass and persecute those who attempt to do so (as in the case of Poland) are unjust.

For justice which suppresses the rights and curtails the freedoms of the people is a contradiction. The role of justice is to guarantee and protect the rights and freedoms of the people.

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## SUMMARY

The foregoing discourse on democracy was necessary. Since we are to examine the contribution of the Christian Church to democracy in the Caribbean, we must know what constitutes democracy. We have seen that "government of the people, by the people, for the people" means at least that the people have the right and opportunity to elect and reject their rulers by orderly process of the vote. On this standard, South Africa for example is not democratic since the large majority of its population are disfranchised. But the vote per se, is not all. Having elected leaders, the people have the right and opportunity to offer open criticism in free speech, of policies and actions of which they disapprove. On this standard, societies with a muzzled press and laws forbidding or restricting political association and assembly are not democratic.

## CHAPTER V

# DEMOCRACY IN THE CARIBBEAN

What then, is the status of Democracy in the English speaking Caribbean, and what contribution if any has the Christian Church made to its development and maintenance? What role does the Church exercise today in that enterprise?

There will never be unanimity among social historians as to the value to the Caribbean of three centuries of British rule. There is greater unanimity as to the negative economic effect on these territories of British mercantile, imperial and colonial policies.

Whatever those judgements may be, the British have little to be ashamed of in the political and institutional legacies which they bequeathed to their ex-colonies in the region. The Independence Constitutions of the various territories are all "Westminster Model" Democracies, with very robust political party rivalry as a functioning reality. The system includes

- Independent Judiciary
- Reasonably Honest Civil Service many of the seniors being of very high calibre
- Tradition of non-involvement of the security forces in political affairs

- FREE PRESS

- Lively Trade Unions: In the case of Jamaica there is a symbiotic connection between major trade unions and major political parties.

These newly independent Caribbean nations have remained members of the British Commonwealth of Nations within which democratic ideals continue to be nurtured through such Institutions as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and linkages to the British Judiciary through the Privy Council. Now it is a matter of record, that more than forty nations have "graduated" from British Colonial dominations in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean Basin, with a similar framework of Democratic Institutions. But relatively few have been able to remain on this course for long. Some have fallen to military coups. Some have gravitated towards strong-man dictatorships. Many have resorted to forms of "One Party Rule" which in the ostensible motivation of unity have really been devices for suppressing minorities and squashing dissent. The remarkable exception to this trend has been the post-colonial history of the Caribbean democracies where there have undoubtedly been alarms and crises but in general the system has weathered the storm and been strengthened by the tests.

There have been two major aberrations from this general course.

# 1. GUYANA

This is the only country in South America with a background of British rule. Originally settled by the Dutch, it was ceded to the British in 1814 and gained independence in 1966. The population has a larger percentage of East Indian component than any other Caribbean Commonwealth country actually outnumbering negroes. Officially, Christianity is the religion with the largest following (57%) followed by Hinduism (33%) and Islam (9%).

Two factors of major importance have affected the course of development of modern Guyanese political life.

- a) Political cleavage in the society along largely racial lines of loyalty: with the majority of rural Indians supporting the People's Progressive Party of Cheddi Jagan: and the majority of negroes supporting the P.N.C. (Peoples National Council) led for over twenty years until his death in August 1985 by Forbes Burnham.
- b) The fact that both major political parties are avowedly Marxist in orientation. The main difference seems to be that Cheddi Jagan of the P.P.P. does not shun the description Communist and has been for three decades a loyal pro-Soviet Communist.

Naturally, a struggle for power between two Marxist parties has not been the gentlest of affairs, but the ruling party under Forbes Burnham sought to maintain at least the outlines of a democratic system while using every means to emasculate the opposition and consolidate their own position on a permanent basis. The fact that the opposition does not constitute a palatable alternative to many conservative-minded Guyanese, contributes to a certain degree of apathy in the face of P.N.C. excesses. And there have been excesses. Government has all but squeezed the non-government press out of existence. Only the Catholic Standard seeks to give to Guyanese and the world, information and opinion other than the official Party Line; and all manners of strategies have been used to suppress the Standard - from a multiplicity of libel suits to harassment of the Editor, to starving them for newsprint.

Elections have been less and less fair through the years. International observers at the 1980 presidential elections spoke of "massive and blatant fraud." There were similar charges at the last election following the death of President Burnham. Protests and denunciations by church leaders in Guyana led to raids on the homes of prominent churchmen and attempts to brand them as being "subversive."

Democracy remains at risk in Guyana: one of the organizations whose influence may yet save it from total demise is an active and alert Christian leadership, with the courage to oppose excessive incursions on the peoples' rights.



## 2. GRENADA

Grenada is a small island (133 sq. miles) with a population of 116,000. It was a British territory from 1763 until Independence in 1974. Between 1953 and 1979 the dominant figure in Grenadian political life was ERIC GAIRY who first as Trades Union leader and then as leader of the Grenada United Labour Party led the country through its various constitutional stages to self-government in 1967 and Independence in 1974.

Through the years Gairy became increasingly corrupt and dictatorial, contemptuous of the constitutional niceties and willing to use violence and deceit to retain his absolute control over the country. He made use of bullies known as the "Mongoose Gang" to terrorise his opponents and many beatings and even killings were attributed to them.

The Caribbean Conference of Churches over the years after it came into being, made active representations in the interests of human rights in Grenada under Gairy, sending resolutions not only to the Grenada government but also to the Commonwealth Caribbean Governments.

Whether these representations had any restraining influence at all on the regime, it is hard to say. But at least it was the voice of the church raised in the interest of democratic freedoms. There might well have been greater excesses without it.

### THE MARXIST COUP

The excesses of Eric Gairy provided a ready climate for elements of the intellectual left to gain sympathy and credibility as alternatives to Gairy's regime. However, too impatient to await what might have been an eventual victory at the polls, on March 13, 1979 a small group of radicals led by an Attorney, Maurice Bishop, and others of their New Jewel Movement, seized power in a coup while Gairy was away on a visit to the U.S.A. They suspended the constitution and proceeded to rule by decree or "Peoples Law" promulgated by the People's Revolutionary Government of Maurice Bishop. This aborting of the constitution was only the first of many blows to democratic rights that would unfold over the next four years.

- Under People's Law number 8, proclaimed March 28, 1979 Preventive Detention was instituted for a wide range of offences, later extended to include "to subvert or sabotage the People's Revolutionary Government." Under this law over 1000 persons were at differing times during the regime's tenure, to lose their freedom. At least two died in detention.
- Much private property was seized and put to use by the P.R.G. usually without any compensation offered e.g. houses occupied by top government officials Bernard Coard and Unison Whiteman.
- When Maurice Bishop & Co. seized power, they had promised an

early return to Constitutional Government and the holding of elections. As time passed, they showed decreasing interest in that path and various Ministers of that regime made derogatory remarks regarding the virtues of "Westminster-style" elections. No election of any sort was held by the P.R.G.

Press Freedom was more or less abolished by People's Law #18 of 1981 which stated "no newspaper or other paper, pamphlet or publication containing any public news, intelligence or report of any occurrence or any remarks or observations thereon, or upon any political matter published for sale, distribution or other purposes shall be produced, printed, published or distributed in Grenada during the period in which this Law shall have effect."

The exception allowed was those organs which had been in continuous publication since October 29, 1979, that is - publications sponsored by the Bishop regime!

Bishop's resort to arbitrary rule and his suppression of those conventions and institutions by which a democracy protects its people and their leaders, in turn provided the opportunity for his own violent downfall and bloody end. His own colleagues turned against him and on October 19, 1983, he together with some members of his Cabinet, was gunned down by soldiers loyal to the more radical faction within the P.R.G. This atrocity and the following few days of terror provided the pretext and the reason for a combined United States and Caribbean military force to invade the island, excise the murderous regime and seek to set its people back on their constitutional democratic course.

What was the role of the church in this troubled period of the life of the people of Grenada? The following quotation from the 1984 survey by Donald Trotman and Keith Friday of "Human Rights in Grenada" published by the B.I.P.I.A. is relevant:-

"Generally, under the P.R.G., all Christian Churches enjoyed freedom of worship and religion. But there were notable instances of harassment and indirect interference with this freedom; and there is evidence of plans to subvert and increase pressures on the main denominations. There is enough to support the assumption that the Roman Catholic Church would have been targeted for suppressive action with its Bishop as the bull's eye.

The Bishop and the Roman Catholic Church had stood up and spoken out against the human rights violations of the regime, and particularly against the arbitrary arrests and detention of citizens. There is evidence that the P.R.G. had commissioned Cuban and Grenadian investigations to inquire into the religious situation in the island, and to formulate plans for subversion, suppression and control of the Church."

Regarding opposition to arbitrary detentions the following is reported - "Pressure was beginning to rattle the P.R.G. (in 1980) from three main quarters - locally from the Church (the Roman Catholics, the Anglicans and the Methodists), regionally from the Governments of Barbados, Dominica, St. Lucia and Jamaica, and from the press through its members of the Caribbean Press and Broadcasters Association . . . . Internationally, the U.S. and British press, the U.S. Government, Amnesty International and the International Red Cross."

Significantly, one of the few organizations within the country with the courage to oppose the excesses of the regime was the Church. It must further be remembered that in addition to the overt and official representations of the Christian Community, there were the silently determined believers throughout the society who did not agree with, and did not want to be a part of those excesses. These are the people within a society whose very presence protect it from giving way to mass madness.

Some space has been devoted here to the Grenada experience because it represents the widest divergences from the democratic patterns inherited from the British, with aberrations towards autocracy of the Right in the case of Gairy, and of the Left in the case of Bishop and his killers. With a few alarms here and there, such as coup attempt in Dominica and unprecedented levels of political violence in Jamaica in the 9 months leading up to the general elections of 1980, the other English speaking territories of the region have remained on course. As has been seen, this is in sharp contrast to the heavy casualties suffered by the 'Westminster system' in Africa and the East. Our question now is - What has been the role of the Church in fostering and maintaining these democratic processes in the region and in Jamaica in particular?

## **THE CHURCH & DEMOCRACY IN THE COMMONWEALTH CARIBBEAN**

We have seen that Democracy in the way we understand it here, is a flower of very recent bloom. Caribbean societies were founded by imperialist powers and ruled autocratically for centuries. In most cases the rule was hardly less autocratic in the metropolitan societies, because it was an autocratic age out of which Democracy was to evolve slowly and painfully. Universal adult suffrage in Great Britain is a Twentieth Century event!

But we have also seen that in the Caribbean, and especially in Jamaica, even in the age of slavery and certainly afterwards, the Church (or some branches of it) developed a tradition of social activism which often has political implications and effects:-

- Education for slaves and for the poor
- Land Settlement schemes which in the case of the Baptists in Jamaica took into consideration property qualification for voting rights
- Schemes of Thrift and Self-help
- Direct involvement by members in political agitation: notably three of Jamaica's National Heroes were highly religiously motivated men
  - Sam Sharpe, George William Gordon and Paul Bogle, two of them being Deacons of the Baptist Church.

### **A DEMOCRATIC "WAY OF DOING THINGS"**

I wish here to advance the position that in the final analysis, Democracy is more a cultural than a political thing. That is to say, if people have developed a 'democratic' way of relating to one another in their life situations, it is easier for them to work a democratic political system. And I am about to say, that in many ways a democratic climate developed in the society, cradled in the churches, which prepared the way for democratic politics.

**I refer now to Jamaica.**

Until the 1950s, this was a nation of rural communities. Parish capitals were very small towns, with the capital city dominating as the only real "City". The cultural life of the large majority of the people therefore was rooted in rural events and institutions. The two basic institutions that dominated community life were the school and the church. Furthermore, very often the school was simply an extension of the church's ministry, and the church was responsible for seeing that the teachers were paid.

Unlike some Latin American countries where the Catholic church had a strong urban presence with the priests making periodic forays into the countryside for infant baptisms, christian churches have long been established throughout the inhabited areas of Jamaica. People like the Baptists for example had class houses or preaching stations in small villages where a 'main church' was not yet established; these class houses were often the only meeting-place where villagers could gather and conduct business of interest to the community. The Methodists and to a lesser extent the Presbyterians and Congregationalists provided similar facilities.

Now what were these Community Activities that emanated from the Church-School complex?

## **1. Agricultural Commodity Organisations.**

Farming has been the life of the rural community, and organizations were formed to enable farmers to unite in their common interests. Some of these organizations were Citrus Growers Associations, Coffee Growers, Cocoa Growers, Banana Growers, Cane Farmers: nearly every commodity had its association, and all have for some ninety years been encouraged by the Umbrella Organization - THE JAMAICA AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY.

The point is that these societies did not take place only on church premises: they were actively supported by the leadership of the churches. In many cases pastors were active members or elected officers. These societies invariably began with a hymn and a prayer and this set the tone for a meeting to proceed with decorum - but according to democratic rules: this means that every member had a right to speak and the rest had a duty to listen - even though the flow might not indicate a fount of wisdom!

Government officials, impatient to put over their information or point of view, soon learnt to respect this treasured, democratic independence, otherwise they got nothing done! It has been a cultural thing, ingrained through many generations of doing it so.

## **2. Literacy**

The Christian Religion has a vested interest in literacy. This is especially true of Protestantism which places great store on the efficacy of the written word (the Bible) as the believer's guide to faith and practice. It encourages individual Bible study and personal prayer instead of prayer formulae for private devotion. Hymn singing and responsive reading of Scripture are regular features of the liturgy. It is not surprising therefore that the church has sponsored literacy programmes. In a country where compulsory education is merely a paper provision; and in fact many

children are on the edges or totally outside of the formal education system, the need for adult literacy programmes has always been there. The Christian Churches have offered accommodation and provided personnel through motivated church members, to teach literacy - an important tool in personal development and self worth.

Thus the church has been the sponsor of education at all ages - basic, primary, secondary, tertiary (teacher training) and adult non-institutional. Today, of a total of 958 colleges and schools in Jamaica, as many as two hundred and ninety-two (292) are church schools and colleges:

### **3. Co-operatives**

The development of co-operatives as a means of encouraging economic independence and stability among "small" people has been a concern of the churches. A study of the early history of many co-operatives that survived the test of time, will show that their leadership was drawn from the church. Many Ministers of religion have devoted much energy in this direction, and have had a creative influence on the development of rural economic life through People's Co-operative Banks, Thrift Clubs and similar institutions for the small man.

It is of historic importance that one of the founders of Jamaica Mutual Life Assurance Society was George William Gordon, an ardent preacher-politician and not without significance that the current (1986) President, Rev. Tennyson Palmer is a Pentecostal Minister!

**To Summarise:-** An important contribution of the church to the 'democratising' process in the first century of Post-Emancipation Jamaican History, lies not so much in overt political activity, though there was a fair amount of involvement by churchmen in the political life of the country. It lies rather in the creation of social and economic institutions which reinforced the people's self-worth and independence: and in the development of a form of relationship and a way of doing things which are compatible with the principles of Democracy.

It is the view of this writer that democratic ways are not learnt overnight. A society that has been accustomed for centuries to respond within an autocratic social framework will not automatically make a success of a suddenly imposed democratic political system. If however, the methods and principles of democracy are already embedded in the fabric of social relations, then a sound foundation has been laid for the practice of Political Democracy. This may well account for the high rate of failure of political democracy on the African Continent as well as the level of acceptance of Communist Autocracy in Russia with the centuries of Czarist Autocracy that lingered *right into the Twentieth Century*.

## **CHAPTER VII**

# **CHURCH AND POLITICS IN JAMAICA AFTER 1944**

The system of Universal Adult Suffrage was introduced into Jamaica in 1944 and was contested by two major parties which were to dominate Jamaican politics right into the era of Independence, namely the People's National Party and the Jamaica Labour Party. Party politics and the mass vote introduced a new brand of "politicking" into Jamaica, which posed a problem for the Church.

The problem lay in a change of style from the rather gentlemanly rivalry between individuals well known and respected locally, to a more earthy appeal to a mass electorate, many of whom were illiterate, by speakers representing a national party. Language became more abrasive and dignity gave way to demagoguery.

In a day when the prevailing attitude towards decorum within the church was rather conservative, even Victorian, the new 'levity' of political platforms was frowned upon by many christians. Thus the christian community in Jamaica was caught in an extraordinary psycho-social dilemma. Despite frequent expressions to the contrary, there are few Jamaicans who have not from the very beginning had a healthy interest in political matters. In fact party preferences and prejudices run deep and affect the dynamics of relationships even within the church. Yet there has been a hesitancy on the part of many able christians to go forward and participate in the rough and tumble of campaigning.

Those who out of genuine commitment to public service have entered the fray as candidates, have had to do so with the knowledge of the disapproval of many 'godly' souls. For the conventional attitude was "Politics is dirty, and those who enter it must get soiled." Despite this negative perception, many devout believers have not hesitated to organise and canvass on behalf of their favourite party although they may not have admired its candidate. Similarly, despite the handicap of this negative expectation of their integrity, many notable churchmen have faced the polls and entered the Jamaican House of Representatives. These have included a sprinkling of hardy Ministers of Religion.

## **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 1944 - 1949**

Rev. Felix Gordon Veitch - Baptist representing the P.N.P.

Rev. Samuel Augustus Black

Rev. Reginald Enos Philips - INDEPENDENT

**1955 - 1959**

Rev. Cyril Arthur Morgan - Baptist - P.N.P.

**1959 - 1962**

Rev. Charles DeCordova Wright - A.M.E. Zion - J.L.P.

**1972 - 1976**

Rev. Roy Robinson - United Church of Jamaica & Grand Cayman - P.N.P.

**Hon. LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL - Nominated Members**

**1955**

Rev. Percival William Gibson, Anglican

- INDEPENDENT

**SENATE OF JAMAICA - INDEPENDENCE  
CONSTITUTION**

**1972 - 1976**

Rev. Clarence Samuel Reid - Baptist - INDEPENDENT

- Nominated by a P.N.P. Prime Minister

**1980 - 1983**

Rev. Ephraim Augustus Morgan - Open Bible - J.L.P.

**1983**

Rev. Ephraim Augustus Morgan - Open Bible - J.L.P.

Rev. Clarence Samuel Reid - Baptist - INDEPENDENT

- Nominated by a J.L.P. Prime Minister in the absence of a  
Leader of Opposition.

This readiness on the part of churchmen including clergymen to involve themselves directly in the process of maintaining and operating a political democracy cannot but have heightened the concern and interest of the church in that activity.



## **CHAPTER VIII**

# **INFLUENCE OF THE CARIBBEAN CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES**

(1) "The most significant and dramatic event in Christian history in the Caribbean since the end of slavery was the Caribbean Ecumenical Consultation which took place in Trinidad in November, 1971." This gathering of church leaders from a very wide cross-section of communions in the Caribbean, was sponsored by the World Council, the Vatican and Church World Services among others. The above quotation from Dr. Philip Potter who was at that time General Secretary of the World Council of Churches and had much to do with the sponsorship, might sound like a rather exaggerated claim. But as one who was present and actively participated in those discussions, this writer can testify to the impact of the proceedings on the minds of all who were there.

For one thing, it revealed Caribbean church leaders to themselves in a new light. Many did not even know of the existence of whole communions in the region where we were all working! We ended by knowing individuals whom we had to respect despite the differences. For another thing we spent our time grappling with issues which were somewhat removed from the ordinary agendas of churches. For we were zeroing in on the role of the church in the task of securing for the peoples of the Caribbean a fuller life - not only spiritual but economic and social.

Many left Chaguaramas in Trinidad convinced that we had an obligation to become more directly involved in the struggle for the general well-being of our emergent nations. This was seen not as extraneous to the Gospel we preach but an explicit outworking of the mission which the Lord Jesus accepted for Himself - "To preach good news to the poor . . . to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (St. Luke 4:18 R.S.V.)

Many of those clergymen and active layfolk who gathered at Chaguaramas in 1971 forged a bond of mutual respect and achieved a community of purpose which still redound to the good of the individual nations of the region and of the Caribbean Community as a whole.

Five major decisions were agreed by those meeting at Chaguaramas:-

1. The Caribbean should seek to develop its own appropriate lifestyle rather than to ape that of Europe or America.

2. Caribbean people should seek to participate fully in their own affairs.
3. Development in the Caribbean requires "radical structural change."
4. The CHURCHES must be totally involved in Caribbean development.
5. Every effort must be made to work for Caribbean unity.

On this latter item the consultation made a specific call to the region's political leaders to take steps to end the isolation of Cuba in order to incorporate the people of the Caribbean's largest island into the mainstream of Caribbean life. This writer was told by one of the Caricom Heads of State that when in 1972 they took the historic decision to open diplomatic relations with Cuba, those statesmen took careful note of the churches' Chaguaramas declaration!

One major organizational decision of Chaguaramas was to bring into being a Caribbean Conference of Churches which would implement the mission envisioned at Chaguaramas and to work for the unity and renewal of the church in the region. Two years later, in November, 1973 the Caribbean Conference of Churches had its Inaugural Assembly in Kingston, Jamaica. It is today one of the most comprehensive regional entities of the Caribbean. It is represented in 34 countries of the region and incorporates in membership some thirty different denominational groupings.

Since then, from its own local resources and from funds raised outside the region the C.C.C. has spent an annual average of some U.S. \$1.7 million on "projects and programmes to help the poor in the region and to renew the church in the Caribbean."<sup>2</sup> Further, through its communication network including Caribbean Contact and Radio Contact it has maintained a service of informing the Caribbean and the world of happenings in various territories which might not have received the necessary exposure.

Coverage of events in Grenada under both Gairy and Bishop provide an outstanding example, as also Caribbean Contact's reportage of events in Guyana through the years. By these means and by timely communiques on critical events, the C.C.C. has sought to act as a conscience of the Caribbean in relation to justice and democracy. Predictably, it has been accused by irate politicians of political meddling: it has been regarded with suspicion by conservative Christians as a haven for extremists. One thing is certain however, it has become an important leaven in the mix of Caribbean life that cannot be ignored. Its permanent staff have learnt much from the early years and with its greater maturity should be recognised as an ally to all who care for the well being and development of the peoples of this region.

## CHAPTER IX

# JAMAICA - CHURCH & NATION, 1970 - 1986

The decade of the seventies was ushered in with a certain measure of tension between church and government in Jamaica. The cause of this tension was the fact that church leaders had become increasingly unanimous in the view that the then existing National Lottery was a morally corrupting influence in the society and should be abolished. Since the Lottery was an instrument of Government policy, the opposition of the church to the Lottery was unfortunately perceived by many as a campaign against the Government.

It is an intellectual failure which bedevils relationships at many levels in this country: a failure to understand the difference between disagreement over a specific policy or decision, and total opposition to a party or a person. It may be true that if a regime is unalterably wedded to a policy which appears to be fundamentally detrimental to the good of the nation then the regime itself should be opposed. But not many policies are that fundamental. And it is to be assumed that rational men can be persuaded to alter bad policies by reasonable critics. This is the value of free expression within a democracy. Unfortunately, many Caribbean politicians exhibit the arrogant attitude of requiring unconditional support. When that is not forthcoming, they assume avowed enmity where none exists.

Consequently, when in 1972 the J.L.P administration went down in massive defeat at the polls, there were many who reckoned that the militant opposition of church leaders to the continuation of the Lottery, had been a contributory factor to that defeat. A J.L.P. Leader was later to speak derisively of the Jamaica Council of Churches as "the P.N.P. at prayer"!

What is undoubtedly true, is that the period saw the emergence of a group of clergymen willing to explore with their fellow-citizens responses to the problems that beset the nation at large, far less reticent about taking positions publicly on issues that might be considered controversial, and far less apprehensive at the danger of attracting the wrath of politicians. In short, they showed themselves willing to participate at all levels in the task of nation-building, and run the risk of being categorised as being "political."

A certain fortuitous circumstance facilitated the formal recognition of this reality. The Prime Minister elected to office in 1972 was Mr. Michael Manley, who was propounding his political method of "Participation". In brief, his thesis was that if Government is to get the

maximum co-operation of the people in the tasks of nation-building, and also be able to call upon them to make sacrifices when the occasion arose, then all sectors must be given the opportunity to be a real part of the decision-making process, and must feel that their voice counts for something.\* Now it so happened that in an article not long before the general election, this writer had made the following criticism of the way the parliamentary second chamber was composed and operated.

"The Senate is being misused by both political parties. Appointments are often made as a reward for faithful political 'failures'. In such instances, the dimension of responsible independent scrutiny of issues and laws which the Senate should provide, is lost, and the Senate degenerates into an impotent rubber-stamp for the political line-up of the House. We propose that current policy on this matter be re-examined by the parties and in the new parliament the composition of the Senate be made aligned more clearly with the original will and spirit of the Constitution . . . it should be clear by now that in the tightly political percentage representation within the Senate the country has robbed itself of the services in parliament of religious leaders many of whom cannot only preach sermons but by talent and training as well as spiritual insight could strengthen the quality of Legislature. If both parties could accept this, I am sure they could do something about it." Without hurting themselves, they could well do something about it. My idea at the time had been that the Government and the Opposition could each perhaps agree to nominate even one Independent person among its quota of nominees to the Senate. That way the formal political balance between the two parties would not be upset, but non-partisans could have the opportunity of making a contribution. (*N.B. The Constitution provides for the Prime Minister to nominate 13 Senators and the Leader of the Opposition to nominate 8. It is a delicate balance which enables the Government to mobilise a simple majority from among its nominees for the passing of laws, but forces it to gain the support of at least one member from the Opposition side in order to effect major changes to the Constitution.*)

After the 1972 General Elections, the new Prime Minister telephoned to say that he was impressed by some of the things I had been saying, including comments on the Senate. In pursuit of his policy of participation he would be willing to provide a seat for a Churchman in the Senate among the thirteen that he was entitled to nominate and would be pleased if I agreed to be that person. I indicated my willingness to serve, on condition that it was made clear that I was not a party member but was there as an Independent to bring the insights of the church to matters before the Senate. Thus a Churchman served as the only Independent in the Senate from 1972 - 1976, - a constitutional 'first' in Independent Jamaica.\*

A more compelling need for such involvement arose again in 1983. A general election was called by the incumbent J.L.P. Prime Minister Edward Seaga which the P.N.P. refused to contest. As a result all candidates of the J.L.P. were returned to create our first One Party House in Independent Jamaica. It became necessary, in the absence of an Opposition, to provide such a force through the Senate. Eight Independent persons were invited in their own rights to fill the Opposition places in the Senate. Among them was the same Independent Clergyman of the 1972 Senate.

Note should be taken that in further pursuit of his doctrine of "Participation" the Hon. Michael Manley appointed the Rev. Ashley Smith of the United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman as his Religious Advisor - a semi-official position. These items are chronicled here with this much detail, because they represent a formal expression of the new openness of the clergy to participate at these levels of the democratic process, after the post - 1944 shyness.

Political parties are highly developed in Jamaica: and the fierceness of loyalty to party in this country is unique in the Caribbean. If the church is to play a positive yet moderating role in this system, it is important for its leaders to walk sure-footedly a difficult path of National and Civic Involvement without partisan compromise. If he succeeds, then both partisans and non-partisans will in time, be thankful that he exists. Michael Manley shows a very fine understanding of this - "In a situation where every politician is to some extent compromised by his party affiliation, the one man who stands out nationally and within each community as above and beyond politics is the clergyman. Further, the man in this position has a natural platform and with easy, one might almost say occupational access to the people at large. It is he who can teach the lesson of national unity and co-operation. He is the voice that can proclaim the distinction between the legitimate conflict of democratic politics and the over-riding requirements of the nation. He can teach the lessons of unity without being suspected of political manoeuvring."\*

Fine! The problem is that politicians would further define the clergyman's role as a sort of emasculated neutrality, no matter what is going on. Whereas what is required is the objectivity of independent minds and the courage to advocate what is right. There is a world of difference between the two!

***N.B.** It has been pointed out to me by the Hon. Hector Wynter that when in 1962 the Hon. Sir Alexander Bustamante appointed both Sir Frank Worrell and himself as members of the Senate, they were not members of the J.L.P. In that sense they were independents. But they were part of the Party Caucus and therefore spoke for the Government. After an initial visit to the Government Caucus in 1972, I decided not to*

*attend as it was incompatible with my Independent status. I did however advise the leader of Government business that in fairness to the Government side, if I decided to vote against them on an issue, I would give them fair warning!*

Ironically, the political leader who penned those insightful words in 1978, was to create circumstances which persuaded many clergymen of the widest spectrum of theological traditions to take up positions of active political opposition. In pursuit of its political ideology of "Democratic Socialism" the P.N.P. began in its second term (1976-1980) to adopt positions which alarmed many devoted Christians.

- Its "principled relationship" with Cuba proved in practical terms to be a very "special relationship" with the Cuban regime with its representatives in Jamaica appearing to have extraordinary privileges.
- Elements within the governing party began to project ideological positions indistinguishable from communism.
- An undeclared yet visible association developed with the Communist Workers Party of Jamaica.
- The National Executive of the P.N.P. through its officers claimed special rights in relation to Cabinet business and took far-reaching decisions which the Cabinet was expected to implement, and in one notable case of breaking with the I.M.F.
- Strident pronouncements fomenting class conflict were deliberately publicised, increasing tensions in the society to an unbearable degree. Many fled the country in fear.

These and other ideological storm warnings, far more than the worsening economic conditions of the period, stirred many of the most conservative elements within the Christian community, who would previously have nothing to do with things "political", to think again. They saw the "Communist threat" as a danger at two levels.

1. Communism's expressed atheism was the challenge of Anti-Christ which was theologically unacceptable.
2. The communist record of suppression of the church was seen as a direct threat to their existence and their freedom to propagate the faith.

This perception of the likely outcome of tendencies within the Government led to a judgement that fundamentals were threatened. The former reticence about political action was cast aside, and many engaged in activity which some of us who were early in the field of public involvement, would not attempt. They felt obliged to campaign actively for the removal of the regime which was the source of this fundamental challenge to the faith as they saw it.

It may be said in summary then, that one result of the more extreme expressions of "Democratic Socialism" in the later seventies in Jamaica, was the politicisation of the Evangelicals. Some have not looked back: they are in concert on issues and to make pronouncements on public issues in a way in which they could not previously act.

Whatever might be the long-term implications of these developments for the church, it cannot but enrich the democratic processes within the society. For it surely is not good for a democracy that large bodies of influential people stand aloof from the public airing of national issues because they may have political implications!

## **CHALLENGES TO THE CHURCH IN THE REGION**

From the historical survey, we have seen that the majority of the people who made up post-Columbian Caribbean societies were not from Christian backgrounds.

- The Africans came with their animist and tribal religions
- The Indians brought their Hindu beliefs

But by the end of the nineteenth century the Christian Faith had gained an apparently unchallengable dominance in West Indian societies. The forms may not always have been as theologically and culturally pure as the orthodox would like: but the allegiance to Christ and His Church was genuine enough.

The upheavals of twentieth century wars; the tremendous mobility of Caribbean peoples during this century with mass migrations to Europe and North America; and the development of a nationalistic spirit in the region which ceased to accept as automatically 'right' the religion of the West; all these have led to a new and open minded attitude towards the church and its claims.

The exposure of Caribbean Man to the winds of the twentieth century has subjected the church to a range of challenges that the church world-wide is facing.

### **1. Secularism of a Scientific Age**

People no longer automatically seek or assume a religious explanation for physical phenomena. Scientific research, and the steady conquest of what were previously mysteries of our world, have increased man's faith in his own abilities to discover, to explain and to control.

The tremendous advances in medical science, in environmental control, and in the conquest of space, have all contributed to man's self-confidence. Even those who do not obviously participate in the benefits of these new advances, are aware of them, and therefore share in this man-centered mentality. Science is working 'miracles', therefore many do not automatically look to the church anymore as the sole provenance of things wonderful.

The emergence of modern governments that accept social services as integral to their portfolios of responsibility, (no matter how poorly they fulfill it) has placed education and welfare for the population at large on an optional basis for the church.



## 2. Materialism

Complementary to the secularism of our times, is a militant materialism. If a thing is good, it must prove itself in dollars and cents. Not only so, but the benefits must be immediate. The age of 'instant' foods and 'instant' communication, requires 'instant' comforts and they must be tangible.

Religion which projects 'final' satisfaction into the future, has no obvious appeal. Not surprisingly, this has given rise to a crop of "consumerist" evangelists in the United States of America who peddle a success Gospel. TRY FAITH and YOU SHALL BE RICH! The economies of the Caribbean are not conspicuously geared to support such a gospel, but the demand for material satisfaction is very high, and constitutes a challenge to the church of the late twentieth century.

## 3. Religious Pluralism

Caribbean nationalism in this century has inspired a search for cultural identity. This search has encouraged Caribbean peoples to emphasise their cultural 'roots' in contra-distinction to former efforts to unify under the blanket of West European culture. One of the most powerful and persistent root influences is Religion. Inasmuch as the Christian Faith has been identified in the minds of people with Europe and the colonial past, there has been a new open-ness to other religious expressions which might be accorded equal legitimacy.

Among the large Indian populations of Guyana and Trinidad there has been a resurgence of the ancient faiths of India and a new pride in Indian culture.

In Jamaica, there was no Indian population of comparable size to sponsor a serious spread of Indian religions. Jamaica instead produced its own home-grown variety - Ras Tafarianism. Starting as a protest by poor blacks, at their practical exclusion from the mainstream of Jamaican society, it first of all rejected Jamaica as 'home' and looked to Africa the black man's country as a kind of heaven on earth. An early Rasta song said "I want to go to Ethiopia, where I'll have no rent to pay." The invasion of Ethiopia by Italy, the flight of Ras Tafari the Ethiopian prince, followed by his dignified appearance before world bodies in defence of his country's independence, caught the imagination of the Jamaica back-to-Africa aspirants. Here was an African playing an important part on the World Stage. As Haile Selassie I, he had become Emperor of Ethiopia in 1930. He was raised in the thinking of the Jamaican sect, to the very pinnacle of divinity.

They declared him a god and searched the Old Testament Scriptures for any references to Ethiopia that they could turn in favour of their interpretation. An intricate theology has developed since, with an equally inscrutable language to match.

African rhythms, which had never really been lost to black Jamaicans, achieved new popularity in Ras Tafari music.

Finally, cultic significance was given to the weed cannabis (Ganja) which ironically, was introduced into Jamaica not from Africa, but INDIA.

Ras Tafariism can claim some positive contributions to Jamaican society.

1. Their emphasis on racial pride, echoing the teachings of Marcus Garvey has given a great psychological boost to poor black Jamaicans who previously felt despised and hopeless.
2. Their contributions to music and the arts have enriched the culture. Many talented artists have espoused the movement, the most famous being the late Robert Nesta (Bob) Marley who was awarded one of Jamaica's highest honours - the Order of Merit.

But a fatal flaw to the Ras Tafari Movement has been its sponsorship of a drug-oriented way of life, including a drug-based economy. When American Hippies discovered Jamaican Rastas in the sixties and early seventies, they also discovered a ready source of high grade ganja or marijuana. It was not long before the financial potential of the find began to be exploited. From small beginnings this commerce has grown into a multimillion dollar trade endangering the security of the State, since it entails breaches of our air and sea defences on a daily basis by foreign aircraft and boats.

In human terms, the toll of the drug culture on the youth of Jamaica is signalled by the daily increase in the number of deranged youth on our streets and the large number of formerly promising young men who persistently under-perform and can barely keep regular jobs. There are also the young girls, some schooled even up to University standard, who have been sucked into the system to lose many of the better years of their lives in an aimless excursion from which they may hopefully extricate themselves, though badly scarred.

It is obvious that the Ras Tafari cult with its attendant ills, is a challenge not just to the church but to the society at large.

Insofar as it casts itself in the form of a religion, projecting doctrines that are contrary to the Christian faith and proposing itself as a rival for the allegiance of the people, then obviously it is a religious challenge to the church. But to the extent that it inculcates ideas and generates activities which are contrary to the laws and dangerous to the health and well-being of its citizens, then it constitutes a danger to more than just the church. There are implications for community health, for education, for work ethics, for the rule of law and a host of other matters. There is no sign that anyone in positions of influence in Jamaica is prepared even to discuss these realities; lest they be accused of being

"against the black man"! Meanwhile, the problems remain, and are growing in magnitude and scope.

#### 4. The Challenge of Poverty and Powerlessness

The Caribbean Arena of Christian witness, is a region with a long history of oppression and poverty. We have seen that there are no original Jamaicans because the Arawaks were wiped out by the Spaniards. The negro majority were brought across the Atlantic to be slaves in an alien land.

For much of the eighteenth century, fortunes were made in the Caribbean from 'King Sugar' - but the majority blacks, did not participate in the prosperity. They were slaves who were merely part of the engine of production making the fortunes of the planters and their merchant backers. By the time slavery was abolished in 1834 and the black majority might take a free hand in the economy, the bottom had dropped out of sugar, and the years of prosperity were passed. For the last one and three-quarter centuries, the Caribbean can be classified as a region of poverty.

Jamaica is not among the poorest of Third World countries, but we are poor.

What magnifies the pain of poverty is the existence of visible disparity between the many with little, and the few with much. The Caribbean is coming from a historical position where there were slaves with nothing and masters with everything. After emancipation the system graduated to "Masters and Servants". The categories have been abolished, but in many areas the wide gap remains. In Kingston for example, poverty and plenty stare at each other from gully-course and hill-top. Privilege remains with the monied classes, and the poor have difficulty in accessing even those services and amenities to which they are entitled by law - such as unprejudiced medical attention in public hospitals.

Raising the general standard of living of a whole nation is an exercise in economic management. But removing gross inequalities within the society and eliminating the victimization of the powerless is an exercise in JUSTICE.

The continued existence of conditions of POVERTY, POWERLESSNESS and INJUSTICE, constitutes the most urgent challenge facing the church in the Caribbean today. This challenge may be manifest in two ways.

- A. IN THE DEMAND THAT THE CHURCH SHOULD TAKE ACTION TO ACTUALISE THE GOSPEL IN CONDITIONS OF "ECONOMIC JUSTICE".

- B. IN THE DANGER THAT THE CHURCH MIGHT TAKE THE WRONG ACTION AND LOSE ITS ESSENTIAL ROLE AS A SPIRITUAL AND MORAL FORCE WITHIN THE SOCIETY.**

## CHAPTER XI

# THE DEMAND FOR ACTION

It may seem odd to state that demands for action against poverty can be construed as challenge. This requires some discussion.

The Bible in both Old and New Testaments takes a very tender interest in the lot of the poor. In Old Israel, it was customary not to harvest a field completely, so that gleanings might be left for the needy. Some of the most magnificent expressions of righteous anger, are the fulminations of the prophets Amos and Isaiah against those who oppress the poor. Obligations of generosity are enjoined in the Old Testament with regard to "the fatherless, the widow and the stranger within the gates."

The Christian Church as observed in the New Testament, began to create for itself a structure, in order to attend to the needs of its poor members. (c.f Acts 4:32-37; Acts 6:1-6; Acts 11:27-30; Romans 15:25-27; I Corinthians 16:1-4; II Corinthians 9.) Hospitality and "burden-sharing" are part of the ethos of Christianity. The great movements for Social Service and Welfare have been pioneered by the church - especially so in the case of Hospitals and Medical Missions, work among lepers and other outcasts, right up to the mission of Mother Theresa to the dying.

The word "CHARITY" has developed pejorative accretions from Victorian times, being equated with cold-hearted conscience-salving handouts without any real commitment to enabling human beings to retain their dignity. But in its best sense, charity has never been absent from the church's portfolio of imperatives. No more lofty expression of this than I Cor. 13, can be found in any literature. Jesus, the Lord of the Christian Church, is himself the epitome of sacrificial love - the friend of the poor and needy who "heard Him gladly."

In the light of the above, what then is this new challenge to the church regarding the needy?

The answer is that the traditional Christian response is too little, too personal and therefore selective, and it is calculated to ALEVIATE rather than to ELIMINATE poverty and its attendant injustices. Furthermore there are people who believe in a static order of society, that people are born to set "stations in life" and the poor will always be there because it is so ordained!

On the other hand there are religious persons who take an extremely narrow view of the boundaries of Christian action. They see religion as primarily concerned with the spiritual interior life of man. Its business is to foster a right relationship between man and his Maker and

through that relationship the lives of individuals will be transformed. The transformed believer is under obligation to treat his neighbour rightly and to obey the laws of his country as a good citizen. Such persons take very seriously the disclaimer of Jesus "My kingdom is not of this world", and feel that too much pre-occupation with the concerns of this world will detract from the main goals of seeking "the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." Many who hold this view but are dissatisfied with the 'sameness' of traditional religion, gravitate to the charismatic movement in strenuous search for a "deeper life." They are not necessarily callous or uncaring persons but they cannot see that socio-economic or political action is a proper sphere of Christian endeavour.

It is in the light of such inhibiting factors as I have outlined above, that the church is being challenged to what has been called "relevant action." The way the challenge is posed, depends upon the quarters from which it emanates, whether from atheistic Marxists or concerned Liberals or conscience-smitten Christians.

### **Atheistic Marxism**

Marx dismissed the 'Theological' content of religion as an illusion. God or any such external force does not exist and therefore it is futile to seek solutions to human problems by reference to God. That is a recipe for frustration and inertia of the will. Therefore, those matters which the Christian would consider most essential for his religious and spiritual life, are dismissed by Marxists as irrelevant. Marxists however recognise the church, despite its presumed delusions, as a force to be reckoned with, a reality in human history which cannot be wished away. The challenge as posed by the Marxists runs thus: "If you are not to be totally irrelevant, then prove your concern by struggling to overturn the oppressive structures which are so totally dehumanising."

They also provide a ready prescription for the kind of action to be taken - Join the class struggle: use every means including violence as required to pull down the bastions of privilege: Abolish the Capitalist stranglehold on the economy and return the nation's wealth to where it truly belongs - in the hands of the workers, the proletariat.

The cause is one of justice, and if you do not join you have no right to claim that your God is a God of Justice.

With arguments such as these, Marxists have been able to put some sensitive Christians very much on the defensive: and convinced by them, some religious leaders have taken up arms and joined guerilla movements in Latin America, in the far East and in Africa. There is no firm evidence of such an extreme response in the Commonwealth Caribbean. This may well be however because the Caribbean democracies, with all their imperfections, do provide adequate opportunity

for meaningful involvement in criticism of the status quo without resort to arms.

### Concerned Liberals

The collapse of 'Christendom' and the emergence in this century of millions of responsible citizens in the "Developed World" who yet profess no religion at all, has also brought to the fore Modern Liberalism. It is the legacy of conscience given by the Judaeo-Christian faith to a post-Christian age. It has no parallel in lands dominated by the other major religions.

It has been a moving spirit behind many of the international conventions for the amelioration of the lot of mankind. It has been a prime influence in the lives of many who have committed themselves to work for the relief of famine and to avert starvation, as well as to respond to disaster wherever it may strike around the world. Such persons demand of the Christian church that at least it should do no less than they: but rather with the Lord Jesus as its supreme example the church should be doing much more in response to human suffering and need. In the Caribbean, this group is not very large or influential along these lines. The church does not feel much pressure from these quarters. It comes much more urgently from *within the church itself*.

### Conscience-Stirred Christians

Visitors to the Caribbean soon remark upon the vibrancy and variety of church life. Jamaica is said to have some sort of world record for the greatest number of churches in relation to population.

While it is true that church membership growth is not keeping pace with population growth, it is also true that the church is retaining its hold on a large number of its youth, right up to tertiary stage education. Furthermore, the clergy of the major churches in the region are well educated and widely travelled. Many of the younger generation within the churches, both clergy and laity, are very theologically and politically aware.

The social and political ferment in the Caribbean is an integral part of their experience, and they do feel that their Christian faith places them under some obligation to respond in positive and practical terms to the felt needs of their society. Not only are they genuinely sensitive to the contemporary socio-economic problems: they are also conscious of the pressures from the Left, of those who are anxious to show the church as irrelevant, or even worse, in league with oppression.

FROM WHATEVER DIRECTION IT MAY COME, AND WHATSOEVER MOTIVATION, THE REALITY IS THAT THE CHURCH IS BEING CHALLENGED TO MAKE AN EFFECTIVE

## RESPONSE TO THE POLITICO-SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF THE REGION.

IT IS FAIR TO SAY THAT IN JAMAICA THERE IS LITTLE REAL RESISTANCE TO THE *IDEA* OF A PRACTICAL RESPONSE.

THE QUESTION USUALLY IS - WHAT RESPONSES WILL BE CONSISTENT WITH THE CHURCH'S ESSENTIAL ROLE AS A SPIRITUAL AND NON-PARTISAN FORCE IN SOCIETY.

### Responses

We have seen (Parts I & II) that at least some branches of the church in Jamaica, have a tradition that goes back to pre-emancipation days, of positive and concrete responses to the problems of the poor and disadvantaged in the society.

1. The quality of Christian teaching in certain churches, did much to awaken in negro slaves, a real sense of their personal worth in the sight of the Maker of all mankind. This led in the case of the Baptist Deacon Samuel Sharpe, to a conviction of his inalienable right to be free. As a consequence, he instigated the last great slave rebellion in Jamaica. But significantly, the method which Sharpe devised was one of non-violent resistance. The fact that it collapsed into violence was an unplanned eventuality.
2. Churches engaged in large scale land settlement schemes for ex-slaves, laying the foundation for an independent peasantry many of whose tenure of their property in the free villages persists to this day.
3. Education has continued to be a major pre-occupation of the major denominations in Jamaica up to the present time. Indeed, at a time when education is proving so costly that even government is complaining, there is at least one church related body, deeply involved in the setting up of a tertiary educational institution in rural Jamaica!

Initiatives in other directions have been listed.\*

We have also indicated that since the Chaguaramas Consultation of 1971 and the formation of the Caribbean Conference of Churches in 1973, there has been a positive awakening among church leadership in the region to the need for a more active participation of the church in the total development process in the Caribbean. Since then, the C.C.C. through its various agencies, and individual church communions have been investing considerable financial and personnel resources into projects that cannot be described as religious, but have everything to do with the social and economic well-being of persons and communities.

In Jamaica, churches are making a conscious endeavour to ensure



that their properties, especially land, are productively utilized and for the benefit of the needy. By grants and loans, they are assisting people to find some economic footing through production - of farm products, of craft items, of whatever their particular talent can bring forth.

The philosophy we may say, is generally accepted, that charitable hand-outs only ensure that people remain poor and dependent. It is more important to provide persons with the skills and the tools wherewith they can build their own future. In short, the church in its major manifestations in the Commonwealth Caribbean and certainly in Jamaica is actively in the business of DEVELOPMENT.

There are those however, who argue that even this is not enough: that while it is a correct method of economic and social facilitation, it will not go very far in national terms if it still operates within what they call "oppressive structures". These structures are the various formulations of a basic Capitalistic system which these advocates demand should be done away with. The demand is therefore for Revolution rather than Evolution, for Liberation rather than Development.

## LIBERATION THEOLOGY

The most dramatic and radical expression of this way of thinking is the movement within the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America which has come to be known as **LIBERATION THEOLOGY**.

The Vatican Council convened by Pope John XXIII in 1962, freed the Catholic Church in the various regions of the world to be less of an alien institution with its liturgy in a foreign tongue, and to seek ways of responding to the deep needs of people where they lived. In pursuit of this goal, the Catholic Bishops of Latin America, meeting at Medellin, Colombia in 1968, issued a historic declaration which proclaimed the church's obligation to take up a "preferential option for the poor."

The implications of that commitment in social, economic and political terms were to be worked out in startling ways by theologians and parish priests in the years following. The most famous expressions of this exploration into the church's obligation to the world of here and now, is Gustavo Gutierrez's book *A Theology of Liberation*, published at Lima, Peru in 1971.

In this work he argues that the Gospel, to be real, must demonstrate its ability to raise the poor from the dunghill of dehumanising poverty and rid them of all oppressive forces so as to make them free beings and children of God: in short, the church must be in the business of *Liberation!*

Drawing analogy from the Exodus, he drew the conclusion that political action may be the most positive imperative of the Gospel in given circumstances. "The liberation of Israel is a political action. It is the breaking away from a situation of despoliation and misery and the beginning of the construction of a just and fraternal society. It is the suppression of disorder and the creation of a new order."<sup>1</sup>

However, Gutierrez's concepts of the old and new orders are cast in Marxist rather than Biblical categories. The oppressive structures of the Egyptian captivity correspond to Capitalism with the U.S.A. as the modern Pharaoh. The new order conversely, is a socialist society. He maintains that the class struggle is a reality whether people perceive it or not, and it is a Christian duty to heighten this perception in the interest of eventually resolving it.

"Those who speak of class struggle do not 'advocate' it - as some would say - in the sense of creating it out of nothing . . . what they do is to recognise a fact and contribute to an awareness of that fact . . .

Paradoxically, what the groups in power call 'advocating' class

struggle is really an expression of a will to abolish its causes, to abolish them, not cover them over. . . . It is the will to build a socialist society, more just, free and human and not a society of superficial and false reconciliation and equality."2

Gutierrez insists that the concept of salvation must have an important "intra-historical" reference. That is, salvation is not a preparation for something beyond time in an age to come, but something attaining concrete expression in the contemporary human situation. He admits that the pressure towards elevating this aspect of the concept is the rise of atheists within formerly 'Christian' societies, who have no interest whatever in a salvation for the afterlife, but have an intense interest in the quality of this life.<sup>3</sup> He does not abandon the transcendent dimensions of salvation, but insists on a re-assessment by the church of its obligations in the here and now.

A large body of literature has developed under the influence of Liberation Theology. It is a powerful influence in Latin America not only in the church but politically. Under its influence priests have taken to arms in different countries, and two have accepted ministerial appointments in the 'Sandinista' Marxist regime in Nicaragua (to the great displeasure of Pope John Paul II!)

A summary positive evaluation of Liberation Theology has been given by Professor R.H. Preston as follows:-

"It takes seriously the injustice and oppression in the world about which traditional theologians have been far too complacent.

It stresses the violence embedded in existing structures in which theology has been too ready to acquiesce. It sees that technological development can easily reinforce these injustices.

It wants to rouse those on the margin of society to realise their own potentiality in envisaging social change and taking steps to bring it about . . .

It stresses that neutrality is impossible when considering social injustices: and that it is necessary to find the sufferings of others intolerable and be willing to forego a clinging to personal innocence, and to bear the toils and conflicts needed to remove them."<sup>4</sup>

The motivation and objectives of Liberation Theology are altogether laudable - a sincere desire to see the church engage in effective action for the 'liberation' and dignification of the poor of the world and the removal of injustice from society.

## Unsound

*But some of its underlying assumptions are defective and are an unsound basis for christian action.* Preston remarks.

" In practice it adopts without arguing for it, a Marxist or neo-Marxist social, economic and political analysis . . . it can hardly be a theological judgement that Marxism is the scientific political and social analysis . . . . The Marxist theories all embody useful insights, but each one taken separately, and the whole lot taken together are sufficiently defective as a basis for prediction (which is the whole point of claiming to be a scientific theory) to provide a very unsafe ground for action. This is not least because Marxism is clearly related to the nineteenth century state of British and European thought and society out of which it grew."5

This uncritical acceptance and use of Marxist categories by Liberationists is especially surprising in view of their claim of rejecting the European 'givens' which have dominated Third World thought: their claim to be pioneering indigenous responses to their peculiar circumstances.

Biblical events are interpreted with Marxist yardstick and therefore have to be very discriminately selected. Much is made of the Exodus event as an Act of Liberation but surely the exodus is not complete apart from the settlement in the 'Promised Land'. Presumably the invasion of Canaan and the expulsion of or subjection of its inhabitants would not be an acceptable paradigm for modern nation building!

This raises the vexed question of the new society. The christian gospel is that through faith in Jesus Christ, men experience the grace of being made whole. Those who are made whole have a dual citizenship. They have place in a Kingdom which is "not of this world". But they have sacred duties to those with whom they share current existence in "this world." Their citizenship of the divine kingdom will inevitably colour their concept of what should be just and right in "Caesar's Kingdom." At the same time it will constrain them in what they are willing to do in erecting a satisfactory kingdom on earth.

These considerations make a fundamental divide between the Marxist who does not accept the existence of God, and therefore whose actions will not be affected by respect for Him, and the Christian who knows that for every action or omission in this life, he must give an account to his Maker and Judge.

That is the reason why Marxist *programmes* for social and political revolution have to be viewed with extreme caution by those who would remain Christian, and the existing utopias that the Marxists have built should be examined with care before encouraging the myth that the truly Christian New Society must of necessity be 'Socialist.'

"On the theoretical side, Marxism involves an uncritical denial of God and thereby extends the alienation of man to the fundamental relationships of human existence by trying to suppress God-man relationships."

"On the practical level, Marxism ignores the fact that wherever its socialist programme has triumphed, as in Eastern Europe, alienation does not in fact disappear. The highly prejudiced nature of the liberationist appeal for the socialist alternative is evident from its silence over Marxism's failure to achieve its promised liberation. In Marxist lands the ruling clique becomes the new privileged class in a supposedly egalitarian society. What present-day socialist country, economic hardships apart, has not surrendered some of the dignity of human life through a loss of freedoms? Which has actually liberated human beings from fear?"<sup>6</sup>

Even more tellingly, the parting of the ways usually comes too late for the Christian who sincerely engages with the Marxist in the creation of *his* new society. Inevitably their concepts of this society conflict: and invariably it is the Christian Liberationist who ends up in jail for 'anti-state' or 'counter-revolutionary' activities, when he attempts to exercise his 'freedom' to criticise!

The relevance of the above brief discussion of the Liberation Movement if it may be so called, is the fact that it has its inevitable influence on the churches in the Caribbean - moreso on some than on others. In preparation for the 1971 consultation on development at Chaguaramas, C.A.D.E.C. published a series of pamphlets on a wide range of subjects, with the intention of making the church leaders aware of the new thinking in advance of the Conference. Significantly, one title was "Liberation or Development - the Role of the Church in the New Caribbean" by Michael McCormack a catholic staff member from the Centro de Investigacion y Accion Social (CIAS) in Bogota, Colombia. The final paragraph of that pamphlet makes the significant statement "The Churches should have no difficulty identifying with the cause of liberation. In conditions where freedom is conspicuous by its absence, the Churches have a message for the times. The message of Christianity is a message of freedom. AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN LIVING NEEDS FREEDOM AS A PRECONDITION." (My emphasis.)

In the intervening years this kind of thinking has run strongly through the Caribbean Conference of Churches, inspiring its approach (as an Institution through its staff and Agencies) to many social and political situations across the Region.

In 1983 the Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies (CJRS) published by the United Theological College of the West Indies, devoted its April issue to a collection of articles displaying the wide range of views stirred by the movement, from the brief, enthusiastic and uncritical sermon of Alfred Reid, to the profound study by David Jelleyman on *The Christian and the State*. The publication is a useful indicator to the kind of effect liberation thinking is having in ecumenical circles in Jamaica.

I believe that the "positive activist" emphasis of liberation theology is a beneficial counter to the temptation of some Christians to concentrate exclusively on the hope of the world to come" to the detriment of their duty to this world. The insistence on the centrality of justice within the regime of christian love is salutary. The reminder that the gospel has political implications adds courage to those who have adopted a 'safe' hands off attitude in the face of obvious political corruption and injustice in the islands.

*The demand however, that the proper response of the believer is to offer allegiance to one specific ideology, is a dangerous temptation which could lead to an entrapment of the church in a system devoted to its demise. This is especially so dangerous because it is a system which claims to be absolute and irreversible and does not admit of a plurality of views. The line that is dictated as 'correct' is the only one allowed.*

The Christian Church, through long, bitter and bloody years of trying to enforce uniformity of view on matters theological, has repented and now accepts the sacred right of the human spirit to freedom and dissent.

It is a strange anomaly that those freedoms so hardly won in the realm of religion, should be freely given up in the realm of politics by the sons of the church! We are not at that point in Jamaica, but the possibility is deserving of attention.

## **CHURCH AND MORALITY - SOME COMMENTS**

Caribbean society as we know it, owes its origins to a historical event of gross immorality. In that event a whole race was exterminated and another was enslaved. In the case of Jamaica the enslavement of the negro lasted for three and a quarter centuries.

The corruptive consequences of such an extended period of slavery on both the enslavers and the enslaved, are incalculable. Those who exercise absolute power over other human beings reckon themselves unaccountable to any man: they are beyond the law. Of many a slave owner in Jamaica it could well have been said - "they feared not God nor regarded man." There is fulsome historical documentation of the fact that by and large they were a grossly immoral lot. Though nominally Christian they paid little attention to the tenets of that faith and exhibited little regard for its ethical precepts. They forsook their moral roots and adopted an anomian lifestyle.

The case of the slaves was even more pitiable. Not only were they uprooted forcibly from their society with its mechanism for reinforcing the mores and principles of conduct of their people, everything was done to eliminate their memories of Africa and her ways. In the important matter of sexual morality and responsibility, a deliberate policy of "animalising" the slaves was adopted by some slave owners who saw the encouragement of an abundant natural increase in their slave population as a cheap way of enlarging their workforce.

The sacredness of family ties was not respected and the permanence of marriage connections discouraged by some. The problem of stabilising the family among the negroes of the Western Hemisphere a hundred and fifty years after emancipation must be viewed in the light of the previous three hundred years of destructive practices. After 1838, the former Jamaican slave society was left to reconstruct itself into a new civilization. The basic outline of social morality is enshrined in the laws of a country.

In the case of Jamaica, the British legal system set the pattern for Jamaican laws: and the formulae for justice were adopted from the "Mother Country". But as it is well known, the best of law codes does not make people moral in character. It merely encourages them to conform to certain required standards of lawful conduct. Morality comes with the internalising of principles by which a man lives, whether or not there be any eternal force to support them. Out of the very inauspicious

environment of a slave society, the churches have been seeking to bring about this "internalising of principles" based upon the Christian faith and standards of conduct. Success has been extremely uneven. The popularity of the nonconformist churches in the immediate post-emancipation decades, followed by the widespread spiritual awakening known as the "1860 Revival" saw large sections of the population vowing allegiance to the Christian faith. Virtues such as honesty and fair dealing, hospitality, love of neighbour, truthfulness and peacemaking were accepted as right. Certainly all self respecting church members were expected to conform to these standards.

The proper desire for justice and fair play which had inspired Sam Sharpe's rebellion in the dying moments of slavery, erupted again in 1865, this time in St. Thomas, but led again by a Baptist lay-preacher Paul Bogle. But a perusal of the speeches of George William Gordon in the House of Assembly will reveal a similar strong prophetic insistence on justice and fair play for the poor of the land.

Inasmuch as the Morant Bay Rebellion triggered a turningpoint in the constitutional as well as economic development of Jamaica it must stand as testimony to the effect of the Christian faith on the morality of public administration.

Jamaica entered the twentieth century one of the most peaceful countries in the world. Crime, apart from "crimes of passion" was at a minimum. Women and children walked lonely places in security and the unlocked door was a widespread sign of the public's sense of security.

Church attendance was the norm for a majority, and those who did not attend, kept the peace on Sunday. Many who were not Christians believed that that was the proper life to live and even aspired to do so "one day".

A different temper developed after the Second World War. Many young Jamaican men went to Canada and the U.K. to join the fighting forces and others went to the U.S.A. to work in munitions factories and elsewhere. They were the front-runners in a wave of migration that robbed the country of an important element in its population numbered in hundreds of thousands in the last forty years.

Many parents migrated leaving their children to be brought up by less capable persons, resulting in the rise of serious juvenile delinquency. Many migrants returning from metropolitan "Centres of Christianity" expressed disillusionment at the quality of church life which they experienced abroad. The religious reinforcement of formerly unquestioned standards of behaviour, began to be loosened.

Partisan politics began to contribute an increasingly negative influence on morals. Loyalty to party became the highest commitment for many and this commitment often demonstrated itself at the expense of honesty and truth. When political rivalry reached the stage of naked



violence, terrorism and the use of guns, there were many who held that party commitment more dear than the sacredness of human life. To the nation's shame, the year 1980 saw the deaths of nearly a thousand Jamaicans in internecine political violence.

Many young men who became involved in gun-toting for political parties claim to have been issued their weapons by important political figures. The erosion of law and order in the country must therefore be partly blamed on the actions of unscrupulous political powerseekers.

Since the rewards for the sort of loyalty here described was an unfair allocation of scarce public resource, corruption attached itself to the handling of the public purse as well.

The major question is - since most of our politicians over the years have professed some sort of religious allegiance, how is it that they have tolerated within their ranks the level of violence and corruption which the nation has witnessed. In personal conversations with professed believers in the political system, I have received excuses varying from "It would have been worse if I had not stood out against it" to a weak and unconvincing "I do not know where they get these weapons". A few, more honest than the rest claim it was a matter of self-defence. The other side were arming so they had to defend their people!

History will show that numerous efforts were made by church leaders by public appeals, private conferences and all manner of suasions, to reduce the violence and animosity among the politically divided people. It is difficult to say whether things would have been much worse, but for those strenuous efforts on the part of church leadership!

It is generally conceded that for some time now Jamaica has been suffering from an unacceptably high rate of crime in general, and of violent crime in particular. Some years ago, in an interview for radio the then president of the Jamaica Baptist Union the Rev. A. E. Brown was asked what the church was doing about the crime wave. His reply still has some basic relevance "Look! When people are afraid to go to their beds at night because of criminal attacks - it is not church members that they are afraid of!"

For with an increase in the number and percentage of Jamaicans who hold no Christian allegiance, there is also a corresponding increase in the volume and brutality of crime in Jamaica.

There is an important area of life in which the Church in Jamaica and indeed in the Caribbean has laboured with very limited success. That is in the area of *FAMILY LIFE*. We noted at the beginning of this section, the fact of the disruptive nature of the slave trade and the slave system. The human institution that suffered most was the *FAMILY*. Neither West African family structures nor Christian patterns of family life received much encouragement to take root in the slave system. It was a process of three hundred years of dehumanization.

The Christian church, especially the nonconformist missions, began to evangelise the slaves and incorporate them into the fellowship of the church. One of the requirements for church membership was a commitment to faithful monogamy. As a result, many adherants to the Christian faith remained on the periphery of the church without seeking full membership. They sent their children to Sunday School, supported the cultural activities of the church and gave respect to its personnel and teachings. If, eventually, a couple who had lived faithfully together for many years, decided or were persuaded by the children to marry, they might then seek membership in the church.

The concept of Formal Marriage it would appear, was embedded in the consciousness of the ex-slaves, as a status commensurate with a certain social and economic level of achievement rather than a moral obligation to a partner with whom one is making life. Many of the respectable peasantry of the post-emancipation generations did bring up their families with great responsibility and affection, but within this non-legal bond which came to be known as "faithful concubinage".

It might have been expected that with the further Christianization of the society over time this informal institution would gradually give way to standard marriage as the normal basis for the Jamaican family.

Instead, it has to be confessed that "faithful concubinage" has withered away, without a sufficiently significant increase in formal marriages in Jamaica.

In 1970 the population Census revealed the following:

Total Population	1,848,500
Percentage Married	33.1%

The 1982 Census reveals a surprising change in marital status:-

Population	2,190,400
Percentage Married	15%

Thus 144 years after Emancipation only 15% of the population of Jamaica are in a formal marriage union. But there were 61,417 births in 1983 and 56,210 in 1985. A large percentage of these births obviously were out of wedlock.

The distressing thing to note here is that "faithful concubinage" is giving way increasingly to casual liaisons or "visiting relationships" with more children being born to insecure and unstable family formations. If this trend continues, then further increases in juvenile delinquency and teenage crime can be anticipated. The Churches have not lessened their interest or reduced their efforts in encouraging responsible family life. But to the extent that this is perceived by the masses as a concern of the religious, to that degree the increasing number of the "unchurched" are likely to ignore the call for responsible family life. It is a matter that

requires the mobilisation of the resources of all organizations of good will to carry a united message in the interest of the future stability of the Jamaican society. On its own the church is fighting a losing battle in this matter.

## PUBLIC MORALITY

While morality is fundamentally an attribute of Persons, it is true that the quality of a civilization can be judged by the standards of morality that are tolerated in public life or in public persons who may be considered as leaders and representatives of the best in the society. Thus a president of the United States of America, overtaken in a mesh of deceits and underhand dealings, even though they were not for personal gain, resigns under public pressure.

Similarly, British Ministers of government, whose sexual peccadillos become public knowledge, do not wait to be asked. They quietly withdraw from public office. These actions are examples of deference to accepted basic standards for the conduct of public persons. This moral requirement of leaders is not new. The Biblical demands of righteousness in leaders so eloquently enunciated by the Old Testament prophets, is dramatized at pagan Rome with the expression "Caesar's wife must be above suspicion."

Simply put, in a morally wholesome society, claims to public respect and trust, must be backed up by reasonably ethical private conduct.

In Jamaica, there is a startling disjunction between the honour demanded by and given to public persons and the disreputable conduct of their private lives. Persons convicted of dishonest actions have been known to retain public office. Persons with the most grossly disreputable sexual history dare to make pronouncements on and even make laws relating to family matters.

Rumours of wide ranging financial impropriety regularly circulate concerning persons in position of trust throughout the society. The trouble is, that these matters do not receive public discussion in the press or elsewhere. There is a lack of public moral outrage: merely a dull cynicism which assumes that all public persons are tarred with the same dirty brush.

If the church is to give a lead in creating a standard of public morality, it will have to cease making generalised statements and specify when known cases are before the public. Similarly, the Jamaican press might become as bold in treating known iniquities as it is in propagating unfounded rumours!

In summary, it must regretfully be confessed that an examination of the Jamaican society in 1986 leaves much to be desired where private and public morality is concerned. Praedial larceny is acknowledged as a

major economic activity. Thousands are engaged in the unlawful activities related to drug smuggling. Embezzlement and larceny as a servant are frequently reported convictions in the courts, indicating an erosion of honesty and the sense of the sacredness of trust.

Family life is in disarray and there are worrying increases in teenage pregnancy, child abuse and incest together with a decline in the place of the institution of marriage as the ideal norm for family formation.

Jamaica abounds in churches and denominations. If one of the objectives of religion is to become a transforming leaven in the lump of society, it would appear that the dough is not being effectively mixed. There is too great a disjunction between the fervour of religion and the principles by which the majority of us conduct our lives in this year of grace 1986.

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